DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 313 326 SP 031 611

AUTHOR Ellis, John A.; And Others
TITLE An Analytical Study of Teacher Perceptions Regarding Staff Development Practices.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of States on Inservice Education (New Orleans, LA, November 18-22, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Faculty Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; Negative Attitudes; *Program Attitudes; Program Effectiveness; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess secondary teacher perceptions of staff development. Participants were 250 teachers selected randomly from secondary schools in Indiana. Survey questions pertained to six basic areas in staff development: (1) program intent; (2) planning; (3) organization; (4) finance; (5) evaluation; and (6) follow-up and support. Teachers tended to agree on the following: (1) staff development should develop competencies ultimately intended to improve student achievement; (2) teachers should be involved in the planning of staff development; (3) meetings should involve hands-on experiences and/or workshops with activity oriented sessions; (5) financial compensation should be used as an incentive for participation; (6) follow-up and support are important; and (7) staff development activities should be evaluated. Some questions on negative teacher attitudes toward staff development were raised by the study. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED313326

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING STAFF DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

John A. Ellis
Assistant Principal
LaPorte Community School Corporation
LaPorte, IN

Van E. Cooley
Assistant Superintendent
Westfield-Washington Schools
Westfield, IN

Jay C. Thompson, Jr.
Professor
Ball State University
Muncie, IN

A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the
National Council of States on Inservice Education
New Orleans, LA
November 18 - 22, 1988

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

V. E. Cooley

J. C. Thompson Jr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 031 611

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS REGARDING STAFF DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Educators have been slow to realize a thoroughly planned and properly implemented staff development program can result in educational improvement. Effective staff development assists educators in keeping pace with the demands of a modern society, training new personnel and enabling teachers to keep abreast of changing trends, knowledge, and new teaching methodologies. Despite many accolades about the merits of staff development, the truth is in many cases staff development has not accomplished the above goals.

Many districts continue to spend large sums of money on staff development, yet experience limited success. Perceptions of teachers are extremely important; such perceptions are one of the many facets that must be examined if staff development is to make a difference and have a positive impact on educational improvement. With staff development effectiveness in mind, a study was conducted to assess secondary teacher perceptions of staff development.

The sample consisted of 250 randomly selected secondary public school teachers in Indiana. Sampling packets with questionnaires were mailed to each participating school. Each sampling packet included an instructional letter to the building principal stating specific procedures by which the sampling should be conducted. Five data collection instruments complete with cover letter, instructions, and a self addressed stamped envelope for return once completed were included in the packet. The five randomly teachers selected from each of the fifty schools constituted the

participants for the study. An of eighty-two percent return rate was received from the original mailing to the schools. Data was computer analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X).

Questions pertained to six basic areas in staff development. These include: program intent, planning, organization, finance, evaluation, follow-up and support. Although responses are reported in five Likert response categories (See Figure 1), for the purpose of discussion the "strongly agree" category will be emphasized. Responses in this category are most reflective of positive teacher responses to staff development.

Teacher perceptions of the intent of staff development have a great deal to do with the success of district staff development programs. Nearly 43 percent of responding teachers reported staff development activities should ultimately develop competencies to improve student achievement. Teachers were also asked if improving educational program quality was a goal of staff development activities. Over 41 percent responded they strongly agreed with this premise. Thirty-six percent of responding teachers strongly agreed staff development should be designed to keep pace with research and new ideas in education. Thirty-five percent of responding teachers reported staff development programs should be designed to meet the individual needs of teachers. Only 28 percent of the respondents believed staff development activities should be structured to improve teacher instructional skills.

Teacher involvement in planning staff development according to earlier studies should be a major staff development component. Over 60 percent of the respondents strongly agreed teachers should be involved in

planning. However, 6 percent stated planning staff development should be the primary responsibility of central office administrators. Teachers were asked if goals and desired outcomes should be written for staff development. Only 46 percent of the teachers agreed written goals and objective should be included. Nearly 42 percent suggested time should be allocated for teachers to talk and learn from each other.

Organization is a broad category where topics such as delivery, program composition, and structure are reported. Over one-third of the respondents revealed workshops or hands-on experiences were a desired system of delivery. Teachers were also questioned regarding who should present staff development. Only one-fourth of the teachers indicated local personnel should present staff development when they possessed the needed competencies.

Teachers were also asked several questions about content of staff development programs. Less than one out of ten strongly agreed that programs should be unstructured to permit discussion of important topics. Interestingly, less than 2 percent stated emphasis should be based on theoretical aspects of instruction; whereas, 55 percent of responding teachers suggested staff development should be realistic and practical. Teachers were also questioned about staff development addressing specific teaching areas. Nearly one-third of the respondents stated staff development should be designed to meet the instructional needs unique to each teaching area. Over a third of the respondents stated teachers should have input into establishing a satisfactory time and place for staff development. Less than 3 percent strongly agreed staff development

should be held after regular school hours. Nearly one-fourth of the respondents felt teachers should be released from instructional responsibilities to participate in staff development. One of every ten indicated staff development should be voluntary. Surprisingly, less than 20 percent of the teachers felt staff development should be required for all new staff.

Teachers were also queried about formal and informal environments for presenting staff development. Nearly 29 percent strongly agreed it was more effective to conduct staff development in a relaxed atmosphere.

Several questions pertained to financial support. Less than two percent of the teachers felt local districts should fund staff development; yet the respondents implied the state should finance staff development. One-fourth of those surveyed responded teachers participating in staff development should be given financial rewards; 18 percent strongly agreed financial support should be used as an incentive for teachers participating in staff development. Overall the majority of those responding suggested teachers should be compensated for participation.

One crucial component to meaningful staff development is follow-up and support at the conclusion of staff development activities. Over 45 percent of the respondents strongly agreed teachers should be provided with materials, guidelines and suggestions at the conclusion of staff development; nearly one-fourth suggested presenters be available for follow-up consultation. However, less than one-fifth strongly agreed follow-up sessions involving teachers and administrators should be scheduled to discuss implementation and utilization of concepts. There was not a strong

consensus among teachers for a staff development coordinator or a staff development resource center. In fact, only 11 percent strongly agreed a staff development coordinator was necessary, and fewer than 6 percent strongly supported a district or regional staff development center. Teachers were also asked if modifications between staff development sessions should be based upon participant feedback. Only 23 percent strongly supported modifications made between sessions based upon teacher feedback.

Evaluation of educational programs is crucial if accountability and improvement are to occur. Several questions pertaining to evaluation were posed. One question was: should staff development activities be evaluated based upon changes in teacher behavior? Less than 3 percent of responding teachers strongly agreed a correlation should exist between evaluation and changed teacher behavior. Only 16 percent of teachers strongly agreed evaluation should follow staff development. Teachers were also asked if evaluations from previous staff development activities should be used in planning future staff development. Less than 20 percent of the respondents strongly supported this proposition.

Summary

Results of this study raise more questions than it answers about staff development specifically and public education in general. It seems clear from these results staff development and the components practitioners have advocated are not enthusiastically embraced by public school secondary teachers in this sample. This raises questions about school governance, preparation for change, and teacher complacency. In a 1986 study conducted by Thompson and Cooley (Educational Horizons, Winter 1986),

administrators reported greater confidence in staff development as an educational improvement tool. Possibly many of the problems that have plagued education in the 1980's are symptomatic of the disappointments experienced by teachers in staff development programs. Any hypothesis on the lack of success or negative feelings teachers have toward staff development must include a critical focus on the barriers often created which minimize the good intentions behind such efforts. Teachers need to develop more understanding and an active involvement in staff development as a process. Staff development is a viable vehicle to facilitate educational professional growth and change as we move into the twenty-first century.

FIGURE-1 PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES AFFECTING STAFF DEVELOPMENT AS PERCEIVED BY SECONDARY TEACHERS

SA- Strongly Agree; A- Agree; U- Undecided; D- Disagree; SD- Strongly Disagree

Program Intent	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
1. Staff development should develop competencies ultimately intended to improve student achievement.	42.9	50.3	4.5	2.3	0
2. Staff development should be designed to meet the individual needs of teachers.	35.6	50.3	11.3	2.8	0
3. Staff development should be designed to keep staff current with research and new ideas in education.	35.6	58.8	4.0	1.6	0
4. Staff development should be structured to improve teacher instructional skills.	28.2	63.8	5.6	2.4	0
5. Improving the quality of the educational program of a district should be the the goal of staff development .	41.8	52.0	4.5	1.7	0
Planning					
6. Teachers should be involved in the planning of staff development.	60.5	38.4	1.1	0	0
7. Goals and desired outcomes for a staff development should be stated in written form.	45.8	48.0	6.2	0	0
8. Planning staff development should be the responsibility of central office and building level administrators.	5.6	28.2	19.2	40.7	6.3
9. Teachers should have input in establishing a satisfactory time and place for staff development.	33.3	64.4	1.7	.6	0
10. During each staff development activity there should be time for teachers to share and learn from each other.	41.8	53.1	4.5	.6	0
Organization					
11. Staff development sessions for teachers should involve hands-on experiences and/or workshops with activity oriented sessions.	36.2	54.1	8.5	.6	.6
12. When local personnel possess the needed competencies, they should be used to present staff development concepts.	27.1	55.9	12.4	4.6	0
13. Staff development programs should be unstructured so participants are free to discuss current important topics.	9.0	29.4	23.2	32.8	5.6
14. Teachers should be released from their instructional responsibilities to participate in staff development.	23.7	48.0	16.4	10.2	1.7
15. Participation in staff development should be done strictly on a voluntary basis.	10.7	28.2	23.7	28.8	8.6
16. Staff development should be required for all staff new to the district.	19.9	31.3	32.4	14.2	2.3
17. Staff development is most effectively carried out during after-school hours.	2.8	8.5	30.7	34.7	23.3
18. Staff development should be conducted during the regular teacher day.	22.0	39.5	28.8	7.3	2.4
19. A staff development program should be designed to meet the instructional needs unique to each teaching area.	32.2	51.4	11.3	5.1	0
20. Topics covered during staff development should be realistic and practical.	55.4	42.4	2.2	0	0
21. Staff development topics should deal with theoretical aspects of instruction.	1.7	18.2	27.8	38.6	13.7
22. When participating in staff development it is more effective if a relaxed atmosphere.exists.	28.8	53.7	15.8	1.7	0

	SA	A	U	D	SD
Finance					
23. Financial rewards should be given to teachers who participate in staff development .	24.9	36.7	29.9	7.3	1.2
24. Funding of staff development should be the responsibility of the local district.	1.7	22.0	36.2	35.6	4.5
25. Financial compensation should be used as an incentive for teachers to participate in staff development.	18.1	37.3	27.7	14.1	2.8
Follow-up/Support					
26. Teachers should be supplied with materials, guidelines, and suggestions for the implementation of concepts presented at staff development sessions.	45.2	50.3	2.8	1.7	0
27. Presenters of staff development activities should be available for follow-up consultation.	24.9	68.9	5.6	.6	0
28. Modifications made between staff development sessions should be based upon the feedback of participants.	22.6	66.1	10.7	.6	0
29. Follow-up sessions involving teachers and administrators should be scheduled to discuss implementation and utilization of concepts.	19.8	68.9	7.9	3.4	0
30. A district or regional staff development resource center is needed .	5.7	24.4	53.4	14.8	1.7
31. Providing staff development participants with materials for the session ahead of time will increase the effectiveness of the activity.	23.7	50.8	18.6	5.6	1.3
32. Administrative support should be offered to teachers working with concepts derived from staff development.	35.0	60.4	4.0	.6	0
33. There should be a staff development coordinator in your district or region.	11.4	32.4	40.3	13.6	2.3
Evaluation					
34. Staff development should be evaluated based on changes in teacher behavior.	2.8	24.3	36.7	31.1	5.1
35 Following staff development an evaluation of the activity should be performed.	15.8	65.0	13.6	5.6	0
36. Evaluations from previous staff development should be used in planning of future activities.	19.2	73.4	6.8	.6	0